

**MEETING OF THE ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE
OF THE PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

**TUESDAY, 23 MARCH 2010
COMMISSION CONFERENCE ROOM, ROOM 578, CITY HALL
DAVID AMBURN, CHAIR**

PRESENT

Dan McCoubrey, Acting Chair
John Cluver
Nan Gutterman
Suzanne Pentz

Jonathan Farnham, Executive Director
Randal Baron, Historic Preservation Planner III
Jorge Danta, Historic Preservation Planner II
Rebecca Sell, Historic Preservation Planner II
Karen Gonski, Administrative Technician

ALSO PRESENT

Brian Perini, Sabra Properties
Ben Leech, Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia
Fran Twardy, Kenrich Athletic Club
Joe Schiavo, Old City Civic Association
Richard Thom, Old City Civic Association
Donald Coles, Dharma Graphics
Julia Frayman
Zory Shmidoff
Gedalia Vinokurov, Gedalia Group, Inc.

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. McCoubrey called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. Mses. Gutterman and Pentz and Mr. Cluver joined him.

121 S. 19TH STREET

Owner: 19th & Sansom Corp
Applicant: Francis Twardy
History: c. 1885, Significant in the Rittenhouse Fittler Historic District, 2/8/1995
Project: Install rear fire escape.

OVERVIEW: This application proposes to install a fire escape at the rear of this corner property. The applicant claims that the fire escape is required for compliance with the fire code. The fire escape would be constructed on the small rear ell of the building and would extend beyond it to the east. The east end of the fire escape would be supported by thin steel columns that would be 1-½ stories tall. The fire escape would be plainly visible from Sansom Street. The staff does not oppose the addition of a fire escape, but suggests a design that is more compatible with the historic building and district.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Denial, pursuant to Standard 9.

DISCUSSION: Mr. Danta presented the application to the Committee. Proprietor Francis Twardy and architect Donald Coles represented the application.

Mr. Twardy stated that he has great respect for this historic building. He explained that Department of Licenses & Inspections is requiring alterations to satisfy the fire code and reported that he is attempting to comply with the fire code. He reported that he has been trying to obtain the requisite certifications for more than two years. He stated that he has already spent \$50,000 to comply with the code. He listed several interior modifications he has made in this effort. He proposed the fire escape as a means to avoid installing a sprinkler system in the interior of the building. He displayed photographs of the elegant interiors of the building and asserted that the installation of a sprinkler system would mar the interiors, especially the plaster ceilings. He appealed to the Committee for its assistance.

Mr. Cluver stated that he agreed with the staff regarding the acceptability of a fire escape, but, like the staff, suggested a revised design. He acknowledged that the Historical Commission did not have jurisdiction over the interior of the building, where the sprinklers would be installed, but would look favorably on a solution that would address fire safety without destroying the historic interiors.

Mr. Coles explained that he is proposing constructing a fire escape from the third floor to the second floor. He noted that there is currently a fire escape from the second floor to the ground. The new escape would connect into the existing escape. Mr. Cluver objected to the design of the proposed fire escape, which extends out beyond the end of the rear ell. He advised the architect to rotate the fire escape 90 degrees to allow the entire stair to remain within the limits of the roof of the one-story rear ell. Mr. Gutterman agreed that the fire escape should be redesigned to remain within the limits of the ell and not extend out beyond it. Several Committee members contended that the submitted drawings were inadequate to entirely understand the proposal as well as other potential solutions. Mr. Coles and the Committee discussed the dimensions of the risers and treads and questioned whether the stair could be redesigned to remain entirely on the roof of the rear ell. Mr. Coles explained that he had tried several designs before settling on the current design. He claimed that the ell was too small to provide a space for the escape. Mr. Twardy stated that he was not opposed to redesigning the escape. Mr. Coles and the Committee were unable to determine whether the redesign was possible. Mr. Coles offered to study the problem and present his findings to the Commission.

ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: The Architectural Committee voted to recommend approval of a fire escape redesigned to remain within the footprint of the rear ell; and approval of the fire escape as submitted, provided that additional study shows that it cannot be redesigned to remain within the bounds of the rear ell; with the staff to review details, pursuant to Standard 9.

2031 CHESTNUT STREET

Owner: Sabra Properties

Applicant: Brian Perini, Esq.

History: c. 1860, Contributing to Rittenhouse Fittler Historic District, 2/8/1995

Project: Legalize removal of basement grate, replacement of basement windows with glass block, painting of brownstone base

OVERVIEW: This proposal seeks to legalize the removal of a decorative basement window grate, the removal of basement windows and their replacement with glass block, and the repair and painting of the masonry, all without permits or approvals. The Commission's staff requested a violation for these alterations, which the Department of Licenses & Inspections issued.

The attorney for the current owner claims that a previous owner undertook all of the work except the painting. However, the attorney also claims that the current owner installed the glass block windows after vandals damaged the basement windows. The attorney claims that the masonry base of the building was painted to eliminate graffiti directed at charter schools students, who occupy the building. Graffiti should be controlled with paint removal rather than repeated applications of paint.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Denial, pursuant to Standards 2, 5, 6, and 7.

DISCUSSION: Mr. Baron presented the application to the Committee. Attorney Brian Perini represented the application.

Mr. Perini explained that the windows were replaced because they had been damaged by vandals and also to vent a heating system. Ms. Gutterman explained that the purpose of grates is to protect the windows. She recommended replacing the grates, perhaps in cast aluminum. Mr. Baron explained that one could install a window, but remove one pane for a vent. He explained that the Commission has approved venting solutions like this in the past. The Committee members stated that the glass block is inappropriate and should be removed and the windows and grates reinstalled. Mr. Perini asked why his client should replace both windows and grates when one grate was already missing at the time of designation. He also noted that the staff had offered a staff-level approval of a compromise that involved replacing the windows but not the grates. Mr. Baron noted that the owner had rejected the compromise and sought to legalize all of the modifications. The Committee members observed that reinstalling the grates would solve the security problem. They also noted that the Commission can require restoration when it is within the scope of work defined by the applicant.

Regarding the graffiti, Mr. Perini explained that his client would like a solution that did not require an application to the Commission every time the building is marred with graffiti. The Committee members explained that layer upon layer of paint is not the solution because the successive layers will trap moisture against the brownstone, eventually damaging it. They recommended removal of the graffiti with a chemical. They said that an anti-graffiti coating may be acceptable, but they cautioned that some coatings could change the appearance of the building. They recommended working with staff to find an appropriate solution, which they staff could approve in the future.

ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: The Architectural Committee voted to recommend denial, pursuant to Standards 2, 5, 6, and 7.

Ms. Gutterman excused herself from the meeting.

149 S. HANCOCK STREET

Owner: Redevelopment Authority of Philadelphia

Applicant: Igor Frayman

History: c. 1825 for Michael Bouvier, master furniture maker

Individually designated, 2/6/1975; Significant in Old City Historic District, 12/12/2003

Project: Renovate shell for residence, install garage in front facade, construct rooftop addition

OVERVIEW: This application proposes to renovate a vacant c. 1825 commercial structure for a residence. The south façade as well as the upper floors of the front or west façade would be restored. The cast-iron storefront at the front façade would be removed and a garage installed in its place. New windows would be cut into the north and east facades, which are former party walls. A large deck and penthouse without any setbacks from the facades would be constructed on the roof.

Several potential redevelopers have proposed the demolition of this building, which is in a deteriorated condition and stands in an otherwise vacant area. The Redevelopment Authority of Philadelphia purchased the property in 1988 to promote its preservation and rehabilitation.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Denial, pursuant to Standards 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, and 10 and the Roofs Guidelines.

DISCUSSION: Mr. Baron presented the application to the Committee. Architect Gedalia Vinokurov and prospective owners Julia Frayman and Zory Shmidoff represented the application. The property owner, the Redevelopment Authority, issued a letter authorizing the applicants to submit the application proposing to renovate the building.

Mr. Vinokurov presented a revised drawing, which showed revisions to the design of the windows on the party-wall facades. The Committee members asserted that the proposed removal of the storefront is the most concerning aspect of this application. They explained the significance of the cast iron storefront. Mr. Vinokurov said that a wall to the west of the building hides much of the first floor from viewers on S. 2nd Street. He also noted that a garage entrance to the neighboring condominium building stands across Hancock Street. He said that a commercial storefront is not needed for a residence. The Committee members stated that Hancock Street itself is a public right-of-way and the west façade with the cast iron storefront is the front façade of the building. Ms. Pentz and Mr. McCoubrey explained that cast iron storefronts such as this one are character-defining features in the Old City Historic District. Mr. Baron pointed out that similar buildings in Old City and elsewhere, for example Spring Garden, have been successfully renovated into residences while retaining their historic storefront features. Mr. Vinokurov contended that this building will continue to deteriorate and eventually collapse if his client is not permitted to renovate it.

The discussion turned to the applicants' parking requirements. Mr. Baron suggested possibly using the adjacent alley to the south of the property for parking. It was noted that the alley is not an open street and is not included within any of the deeds for this or the adjacent properties. Renting or buying a parking space in a garage in the vicinity was also suggested. Mr. Shmidoff conceded that it might be possible to meet their programmatic needs and retain the storefront.

The Committee discussed the proposed rooftop additions. Although the Commission has a longstanding policy of only allowing decks on rear ells of residential structures, it has approved decks on main roofs in Old City, where the buildings typically have no ells, provided the decks are set back from the front facade, usually about 15 feet, to minimize visibility. Because this building stands alone, any deck will be visible. The Committee members suggested that the deck should be set back from the two finished facades, 15 feet from the Hancock Street façade and 3 feet from the south façade. They suggested minimizing the height and size of the elevator and stair penthouse. They also suggested revising the design of the deck rail to be open; vertical metal pickets were favored over the solid wall. They agreed that the HVAC could be located just west of the deck as long as it was tucked below the north parapet wall.

The Committee members cautioned the applicants that there are building and fire codes that restrict windows on party walls. They noted that some of the proposed windows may not meet those codes and advised the applicants to consult with the Department of Licenses & Inspections. They objected to the design of the stucco and window patterns proposed for the party walls. They contended that the rhythm, scale, and proportions are not compatible with the historic building. Mr. Vinokurov explained that he based the design of the party walls on the new construction to the west. The Committee members explained that that new building was not an appropriate model. They asked if the brick party walls could be repaired and not covered with stucco. Mr. Shmidoff explained that many of the bricks would need to be replaced because they are badly spalled; the cost of the masonry repair alone would make the project infeasible. The Committee members opined that, if the brick could not be repaired, then it would be acceptable to stucco the walls with brick-colored smooth stucco and add punched-opening windows, similar in size and shape to the other windows on the building.

The Committee accepted comments from the public. Joseph Schiavo, who represented the Old City Civic Association, explained to the applicants that he lives in a similar building that he restored and has procured parking nearby but off-site. He advocated for the preservation of the historic cast-iron storefront, which is one of the building's character-defining features.

The Committee members explained that they could not recommend approval of the renovations as proposed. However, they did encourage the applicants to revise their plans for submission to the Commission. They suggested retention of the storefront and redesign of the rooftop additions and party-wall modifications. The Committee members recognized both the significance of the building and its poor condition. They encouraged the applicants to formulate a plan that would satisfy the Standards and save this important but deteriorated building. The applicants stated that they would prepare revised plans.

ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: The Architectural Committee voted to recommend denial, pursuant to Standards 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, and 10 and the Roofs Guidelines.

ADJOURNMENT

The Architectural Committee adjourned at 10:45 a.m.

STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES CITED IN THE MINUTES

Standard 2: The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinct materials or alterations of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.

Standard 3: Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.

Standard 4: Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.

Standard 5: Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.

Standard 6: Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.

Standard 7: Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damages to historic materials will not be used.

Standard 9: New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new works shall be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.

Standard 10: New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

Roofs Guideline: Recommended: Designing additions to roofs such as residential, office, or storage spaces; elevator housing; decks and terraces; or dormers or skylights when required by the new use so that they are inconspicuous from the public right-of-way and do not damage or obscure character-defining features.